



Presents:



For Families of Blind and Visually Impaired Children

June 11-13, 2010

10th Annual

Sponsored by

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

The M.S.D.B. Foundation, Inc.

and

The Montana Office of Public Instruction

**Families-Learning
With Families**
For Families of Blind and Visually Impaired Children

Learning Weekend 2010
Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind
3911 Central Avenue
Great Falls, MT 59405

LEARNING WEEKEND 2010

The Family Learning Weekend is a creative program designed to be both informative and empowering for families. The Learning Weekend provides opportunities for families to share their experiences concerning blindness and visual impairment, and communicate with one another in a warm and caring atmosphere.

This will be our 10th Family Learning Weekend for the visually impaired. Our target audience includes parents, professionals and children of all ages. Siblings of blind and visually impaired children are also encouraged to attend. A wealth of information will be presented by various specialists in the field to include technology and computer specialists, transition specialists, teachers of the blind and visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, and most importantly - parents. It is our hope that all participants will benefit from this opportunity to get to know one another and share their ideas and experiences.

The weekend format will provide information in the form of informal workshops, group discussions (parent groups, kids groups, sibling groups, etc.) and hands-on activities. Child care and recreation for the children (siblings included) will also be available at no charge. Families will be reimbursed for mileage at the current state rate. Lodging (campus cottages) and meals (in our dining room) for all participants will be provided by the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind. Past weekends have included the following topic areas:

- ☞ Provide current information as it pertains to the blind and visually impaired.
- ☞ Provide a forum for parents to discuss their concerns as they relate to being parents of a blind or visually impaired child.
- ☞ Introduce parents to various technology in the area of the blind and visually impaired i.e. Perkins brailier, Braille 'n Speak (electronic notetaking device), braille embosser, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), etc.
- ☞ "Hands on" workshop in Orientation and Mobility - to include use of sighted guide technique, white cane and information on dog guides.
- ☞ Provide a forum for parents to share their ideas for involving their children in family and community activities.
- ☞ Provide information on the use of Braille and appropriate instructional activities.
- ☞ Answer questions about providing for the financial needs of children with disabilities.

**** Topics are subject to change based on demand and availability.**

Continuing Education credits will be available. **

emy of Ophthalmology; American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus; Associate Examiner, American Board of Ophthalmology; Montana Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics.

Kerri Norick is an Outreach Vision Consultant for south and south-central Montana. Kerri completed her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education with an option in Special Education. She worked as a regular and special education teacher at the middle school level for 6 1/2 years before becoming employed with MSDB. She completed her Masters in Special Education with an emphasis in Teacher of the Visually Impaired and is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Kerri's hobbies include skiing, hiking, running, traveling, and fly fishing.

Jane Nybo is a Vision Outreach Consultant serving students in the northwest portion of the state of Montana. Her home and office are located in Kalispell. She was born and raised in Missoula. Jane was a special education teacher for 17 years before coming to work for Montana School for the Deaf and Blind in August of 2008.

Barb Rolf is employed as an Outreach Vision Consultant with the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind. Barb is a Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). She has been employed with the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind as a vision consultant for the past twelve years. Barb has worked at both the state and national level in promoting effective education for children who are visually impaired and blind. She is also the mother of a child who is blind and is now twenty-four years old. Throughout her years of service, Barb has been passionate about serving families and helping schools and agencies who work with children with visual impairments. Her position as an outreach consultant with the MSDB gives Barb a prime opportunity to use her skills and fulfill her dreams in helping parents to best understand their role in raising their child with challenges. Not only can she talk about the challenges parents face, she truly understands the emotions that come with that package because she has been there too! Barb resides in Missoula with her husband Ken and her daughter Katie. Her son Karl is grown and works out of state. Barb serves the southwestern region of Montana in her outreach position.

Sharon Woods is an Outreach Consultant for MSDB serving blind and low vision babies and students in south central and southeast Montana. Sharon has undergraduate degrees in education and special education with a master's degree in education in the area of teaching visually impaired birth to 21. She completed certification in orientation and mobility in addition to her master's degree. Her passion is learning and making learning accessible to all children who are blind or visually impaired.

Presenter Bio's

Dana Ard has been a vocational rehab counselor for the blind in Idaho for many years. She now works as a vocational rehab counselor at the Idaho Commission for the Blind serving the Boise area. Her no nonsense and realistic approach to blindness has helped countless VI folks overcome their fears and become more independent. She is a popular speaker for the consumer blind as well as professional workers for the blind and she has won many awards through her association with toastmasters. Dana is blind herself and has held several offices in the Idaho NFB. She has been a guide dog user for many years and loves to introduce folks to her faithful companion.

Pam Boesflug in an Outreach Consultant for MSDB serving blind and low vision babies and students. She lives in Havre with her husband and serves kids along the Hi-Line, Great Falls, Lewistown, Glendive and Sidney. After 33 years of teaching, 28 of those years with children and adults with blindness or deaf-blindness, she has directed her energy and enthusiasm toward consulting. Pam has undergraduate degrees in elementary and secondary education and Masters degrees in Special Education with an Option in Multi-Handicapped and in Teaching Visually Impaired. Teaching braille to children of all ages and to adults at the college level has been a passion of Pams.

Steve Fugate is in his second year as a vision consultant for MSDB. He recently retired from the Navy Reserves. He has been working in the Billings public schools since 1994. He has a BA from Idaho State University and a MA from Stephan F. Austin State University.

Nancy Getten has been an educator for over 30 years. She taught at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind as a classroom teacher, specializing in the instruction of Braille, for 20 years. The last four years she has served as an Outreach Consultant for the Department for the Visually Impaired. She has a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Great Falls in Elementary Education and Special Education and a Master's Degree from the University of Northern Colorado in Visual Impairment.

Ken McCulloch was born and raised in Bozeman. Received his Masters Degree in teaching visually impaired and mobility from the University of Northern Colorado in 1973. Ken taught the VI in Boise for 31 years and recently retired. He has lived in Bozeman since 2004 where he works part-time for MSDB. Fifteen years ago my wife became visually impaired and is now president of the Bozeman Chapter of the MAB. Ken helps her with adults in the area as well as students.

Dr. Weaver is a board certified in ophthalmology, internal medicine and pediatric ophthalmology. He has been in practice since 1992. Dr. Weaver attended medical school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH, internship at Pacific Medical Center, residency at Mayo Clinic and fellowship at Ophthalmology-Wills Eye Hospital in Pennsylvania. His professional activities include: American Acad-

Schedule & Description of Presentations

Friday - June 11th

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Follow the big sign to the Registration area - It's easy to find! We will welcome you, get you registered, and present everyone in your family with a cool "Learning Weekend" T-shirt. Then we'll escort you to your own personal quarters in the Cottages at MSDB. We'll also show you where the Activity Room is for Friday night's activities. Each family is provided with their own suite of rooms and we work to make assignments according to individual needs and preferences. Usually each family has their own bath, sometimes two, depending on the size of the family. All of our Learning Weekend participants have the use of a living room area near their rooms. Towels and bedding are provided. You just need to bring personal items such as soap, shampoo and toothpaste, and make sure your kids bring their swimsuits.

6:00 – 7:00 PM

Pizza and refreshments will be provided in the dining room while Diane Moog, the Principal of MSDB, will welcome you and present a brief orientation to the weekend. At 7:00 PM the kids will go to the Mustang Center to participate in some fun and games.

7:00 – 9:00 PM

PANEL OF SUCCESSFUL BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADULTS

Location - Main Library Area in the Academic Building (IMC)

This group of blind and low vision adults will share their experiences growing up, their education and current situations. They will also answer questions to help you with your own challenges.

Vicky Greaney-is third vice-president of the Montana Association for the Blind. She grew up in Wyoming and attended public school with limited vision from Retinopathy of Prematurity. She married and moved to Montana where she raised her children and lost her remaining vision. The total loss of vision required Vicky to adjust to several unpleasant family and social situations. Her openness and compassion has made her a natural for counseling others and for serving as years as the discussion leader at the MAB Summer Orientation Program. Vicky has also served as a teacher's assistant in the Helena Schools for several years. She is now a grandmother, living in Helena, where she and her husband, Jim, like to ride Harleys.

Dana Ard - from Boise, Idaho will share her experiences. See the bio page for more in-depth information on Dana.

There will be two more presenters (information not available at press time)

9:15 PM

Parents please go to the Mustang Center to pick up your children. You will have the opportunity to visit with other families, let your kids play pool in the activity room, watch TV or a movie, or rest and relax in your own rooms. If you forgot something or need anything, please ask any of our staff and they will be happy to assist you. During this time most of the staff will be off duty and heading home (to rest up for the next two days)!

For your convenience, safety and security, there will be a MSDB staff person present and on duty in the cottage throughout the night.

Saturday - June 12th

Refreshments will be available throughout the day

7:45 AM – 8:45 AM

Enjoy a good breakfast in the cafeteria, a variety of food will ensure there is something for everyone. When you finish breakfast, everyone gathers outside for our Learning Weekend Photo. No small task getting everyone to scootch together and hold still but it's worth it (believe it or not, more than 100 people CAN fit into the picture!). You will get your own copy of the photo before you leave on Sunday.

8:45 AM - Group Photo

Location - Outside in front of Yellowstone

Here's the tricky part! After the photo we divide the children up into groups based mostly on age, but we consider friends, maturity level and interests. The children then stay with their groups until they join you again for lunch. Some of MSDB's finest residential staff will be responsible for supervising your children and making sure they enjoy a wide variety of activities throughout the day. After the group photo, the adults will go to their morning sessions.

9:00 AM - Noon - Keynote Presentation: Trends in Education of the Blind and Blind Children

Location - In the Main Library Area of the Academic Building IMC

Dana Ard - Idaho Commission for the Blind, Boise

Dana will focus on some of the pitfalls of the education of our blind and visually impaired children. She will discuss some of the trends that have had a positive and negative impact on the education of our youth. This presentation will have a different focus than her Friday night chat.

Noon – 1:00 PM Lunch

The staff will bring your children to the dining room. Please find and supervise your own children during the lunch period.

For this session there will be a variety of activities for the participants. These activities may include, swimming, recreation activities, and arts and crafts. As a special treat we will have a Jolly Jumper (an enclosed jumping apparatus like they have at fairs) set up in front of the cottages (weather permitting) for all of the children to enjoy. A schedule will be available at check in. Parents and children are also invited and encouraged to participate in the goalball activity.

Parents, please come to the Mustang Center to pick up your children. Parents will be responsible for the supervision of their children from this time until the Parent Panel begins at 7:00 PM.

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Open swimming for all families

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Barbecue and Social Time

Take this time to enjoy the dinner and socialize with other families, participants and staff.

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Movies for the children will be shown in the cottage. We will also have some activities for those children not interested in watching a movie. Snacks will be provided. We have found that the children are ready for this down time after such a busy day!

9:00 PM

At the conclusion of the Parent Program all parents should go to the cottage and pick up their children.

Sunday - June 13th

8:45 AM

All children should reunite with their groups in the dining room. Children going to the nursery should be taken there by their parents at this time.

9:00 AM - Noon

With the exception of no swimming, this will be a continuation of Saturday's activities. The children will be in the Mustang Center, MSDB Computer Lab, MSDB Playground and/or the activity room.

At noon the parents will go to the Mustang Center where they will be reunited with their families for lunch and the trip home.

Friday - June 11th

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Activities in the Mustang Center (for all ages)

MSDB cottage staff will accompany your children to the Mustang Center and provide supervision until the parent program is completed. All of the children will be involved in several "Ice Breaker" exercises. This should be a really exciting time for the children to get to know each other and the staff they will be working with over the next couple of days. We will still have a few snacks left for those late comers! *Any children that wish to remain with their parents during this session are welcome to do so.*

9:15 PM

Parents go to the Mustang Center to pick up your children. At this point, parents will assume responsibility for the supervision of their children until after breakfast on Saturday.

Saturday - June 12th

9:00 AM - Noon

Children ages **birth to two** will be in the cottage nursery with staff. *Parents should pick up their children from the nursery prior to lunch and return them to the same location when they are done eating.*

Children ages **three to five** will be involved in a variety of activities throughout the day. Activities are weather permitting based and could include a trip to the MSDB playground as well as swimming at the Mustang Center upon parent permission. We will provide one-on-one supervision in the small pool for these youngsters. The activities for this group will remain flexible depending on the ages and abilities of the participants. Saturday morning during breakfast your child or children ages **six through eighteen** will rejoin their assigned teams from Friday night. These teams are designed to allow for the participants to be involved with children their own age. A variety of activities are planned, and vary depending on age. Sometime during the morning session Debbie Metge & Kathy Johnson will meet with the sighted siblings giving them the opportunity to discuss their feelings about having a blind or visually impaired brother or sister. *This information will be shared with the parents prior to the parent panel on Saturday night.*

Noon - 1:00 PM Lunch

Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children during all meals. The children will be brought to the parents for lunch.

At 1:00 PM all of the children should be present in the dining room so they may re-join their group for the afternoon activities.

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM - “The Blindfold Obstacle Experience”

Location - In the Main Library Area of the Academic Building

MSDB Vision Consultants

This will provide participants with a “hands on approach” to the whole notion of Orientation and Mobility. You will experience, first hand, some of the challenges that our children/students face every day in managing their own life skills. This experience is meant to provide you with valuable insight. You are asked to participate **ONLY** if you are comfortable. Certified specialists from our school will be available and will personally assist you in your skill development and keep you safe. We promise!

3:00 PM—3:30 PM - Break

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM -

Mom’s Group

Location - In the Main Library Area of the Academic Building IMC

Dad’s Group

Location - Conference Room (basement of Bitterroot)

Join other parents for an opportunity to share your concerns and solutions regarding raising a child with a vision loss. This session continues to be an important part of our Learning Weekend. Many parents find it inspiring, comforting and even amusing. Parents are separated into "Moms" and "Dads", extended family is welcome of course. The session does not have an agenda; it is simply moderated by a Mom or a Dad who is raising a child with a vision loss. This is a comfortable place to find out you're not alone, support others, and get some ideas to survey the journey.

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM Free time/Open Swim

Parents, please come to the Mustang Center to pick up your children. Parents will be responsible for the supervision of their children from this time until the start of the Parent Panel at 7:00 PM. Families can go swimming if they would like to.

5:30 PM – 6:45 PM Barbecue and Social Time

Location - Dining room

Please take time to introduce yourselves to our special guests and tell them what the Family Learning Weekend means to you.

7:15 PM – 9:00 PM Parent Panel

Location - Main Library Area in the Academic Building (IMC)

Scott & Laurie Monroe (Davi Jean’s parents) My husband Scott and I are from Great Falls. We have a daughter, Davi Jean, who is our only child. Scott is a self employed contractor and in the Air National Guard reserves. I am primarily a stay at home mom working part time as a program

tutor at MSU College of Technology. Davi was born 10 weeks premature with a severe brain hemorrhage causing optic nerve damage. She was diagnosed as being blind and most likely unable to ever walk when we brought her home from the hospital. We are not certain of her vision at this point but we do know that she definitely sees. She has limited peripheral vision and has trouble with distance. She began “preschool” at approximately 18 months old at MSDB. She is now four years old and is attending MSDB four mornings a week. Due to the early intervention with MSDB, Davi has excelled beyond our wildest dreams.

Deva and Chucody McNivn - live in a rural setting outside of Laurel, MT. Chucody is a supervisor for Bresnan Communications and Deva is a devoted mother and homemaker. They are parents of three children ages six, four and seven months. Their middle child has congenital nystagmus, photophobia which causes him significant vision loss.

There will be two other parents presenting (not available a press time)

9:00 PM

After picking up your children from the cottage, you are encouraged to socialize and visit with the other participants.

Sunday - June 13th

7:45 AM – 8:45 AM

Breakfast in the dining room. After breakfast the children will then go with their groups and the adults head back to their designated meeting areas. Infants and toddlers may stay with their parents for the morning session—however, child care is available.

Please note: Choose one of the following sessions:

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM “Pediatric Eye Exam”

Location—Main Library Area of Academic Building (IMC)

Dr. Daniel Weaver, MD - Pediatric Ophthalmologist, Billings Clinic

He will present on the pediatric eye exam including descriptions of procedures and their purpose for diagnosing various eye conditions and prescribing glasses. Dr. Weaver has a broad and distinguished training and experience.

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM A Successful Family!

Location—Main Library Area of Academic Building (IMC)

The Nau Family

Dan Nau, born in Lewistown, will visit with the audience along with his parents Tom and Annette Nau. Dan was born with a visual impairment, along with his older brother Tom. His parents were very supportive and had high expectations for all of their sons – regardless of their disability. Dan’s father was involved in education as a high school principal, athletic director, and coach. His mother worked as a secretary and a bookkeeper at a bank. Dan graduated from MSU-

Bozeman in 1998 and taught in Belgrade, Stanford and is currently the elementary/middle school principal in Sunburst. Dan is heavily involved in the technology aspect of education. He is married and has two girls, Nikki (age 4) and Ali (22 months). His wife Melissa is an educator but is currently enjoying being at home with the girls. Dan’s hobbies include spending time playing with his girls, sports, and anything involving technology. Dan’s parents will visit with the group and it is possible Dan’s brothers may also be able to join us.

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM - Sibling Summary

Location—Main Library Area of Academic Building (IMC)

Debbie Metge—MSDB Counselor

Debbie will summarize the information that was gathered on Saturday from working with the children. She will share some insights into how children really feel about living with a sibling with a vision loss.

11:30 AM – Noon

Wrap Up

Location - Main Library Area in the Academic Building (IMC)

Dennis Slonaker - MSDB Outreach Consultant for the Blind and

Visually Impaired - Bozeman

We will wrap up the weekend with closing comments and distribute the photos that we took of you and your children to take home. Please complete your Survey!! Don’t be shy about making suggestions....we do read them and use the comments to plan the next Family Learning Weekend.

Noon—1 PM

Lunch in the dining room; pick up your children from the Mustang Center.

1:00 All participants should be headed home. Have a safe trip home!

Kids’ Program

The kids program is intended to provide entertaining and educational activities. Activities are designed for not only the visually impaired child but his/her siblings as well. Participants are grouped by age. Staff are assigned depending on the numbers of the participants and their individual needs. If you have a unique concern regarding your child, please let us know and we will work with you to insure that everyone has a good time.

Parents Please Note:

We expect the older children to serve as role models for the younger students and to make the Learning Weekend a fun and positive experience.